

334: THE LATEE HISTOKY OF THE  
LOLLABDS

measures,<sup>1</sup> although in another Parliament, in which the heretics had the upper hand, the knights petitioned for the relaxation of the persecuting laws;<sup>2</sup> the Lollardry of the House of Commons was a fluctuating quantity. The famous statute of 1401, \* Be Hseretico Comburendo,' was directed against the progress of doctrinal heresy, on the complaint of the Bishops that their own officers without State help were unable to restrain Lollardry.<sup>3</sup> The statute afforded means for the burning of heretics which legally existed before, but were now recapitulated and approved with a view to energetic use.

It has been already pointed out that the original founders of the sect, either from uncertainty of their position or from lack of physical courage, made little resistance when brought before the authorities of the Church. Even the last of that generation, John Purvey, the companion of Wycliffe's later years, when brought up for trial in his old age in March 1401, could not find the strength to die by torture for the opinions which he had held so long. But a new class of men had already arisen. Three days before Purvey read his recantation at St. Paul's Cross, William Sawtre had been burned for teaching that ' after the consecration by the priest there remaineth true material bread.' He suffered in the cattle market, where twenty years before young Richard had faced the rebels, and where such executions were to take place for many and many a year to come. \* Acts of faith ' they may well be called, for it needed firm faith to roast a human being alive for opinions such as those of Sawtre. The Middle Ages had given birth to such a ' faith,' that there was no hope for liberty of speculation until by rival ' faiths ' belief in the infallible Church had been undermined.<sup>4</sup>

During the next few years a certain number of prosecutions for heresy took place; all those of which we have record resulted in recantation.<sup>5</sup> But no vigorous assault was yet made on the Lollard party, for the lords and gentlemen who adhered to it were left untouched. Though Archbishop Arundel

<sup>1</sup> See Ap. <sup>a</sup> Wals., ii. 283 ; *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 623 ; St.,  
iii. 66.  
<sup>2</sup> *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 466. <sup>4</sup> *Fasc. Z.*, 408-11 ;  
Wilkins, iii. 255-60.  
<sup>5</sup> *Ecclesiastical Courts, Blue, Book*, 1883, pp. 58-9.